



# Salman Rushdie

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Teaches Storytelling and Writing





# Birth of a Star

The cosmic imagination (and startling realities)  
of a modern fiction luminary



A titan in literary circles and a household name across the globe, Salman Rushdie has become such an iconic figure—his life story so full of intrigue and impossibility—it's as though he's transformed into a character from one of his novels. Except it's all true.

It began in 1947, the year India officially won independence from British colonial rule. That's when Salman was born in Bombay—now known as Mumbai, the city's non-anglicized title—to a businessman and a teacher. His family was part of the Muslim minority, an experience that portended Salman's arrival at boarding school in Britain as a teenager. While he was away, his mother and father relocated to Pakistan, a fledgling Islamic republic embroiled in the strife around the Bay of Bengal. He moved there, briefly, before returning to Britain. Later, the harsh realities of religious turmoil, colonialist superstructures, immigrant life, and the divides between East and West would all bleed deeply into Salman's fiction.

But his writing had humble beginnings. In the '70s, he got a job whipping up advertising copy for an agency in London. During long weekends and days off, he labored on his first novel, *Grimus*. The book garnered little in the way of acclaim upon its release in 1975. But five years later, on his second try, the young author struck gold: *Midnight's Children*, a staggeringly original parable exploring India's independence and identity, won the prestigious Booker Prize for Fiction. The tome cemented what's become one of Salman's trademark techniques: riffing on sacred texts and religious figures and revealing their uncomfortable truths and contradictions through satire.

This is on full display in his fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses*, published in 1988. The book's contents, which were partially inspired by the life of the prophet Muhammad, were seen as incendiary by some Muslims. The controversy put Salman's storytelling and prose under a

microscope, but in the end, both held up: The book soon became the subject of theological analyses and college courses, while Salman was name-checked in tabloids and on an episode of *Seinfeld*. All the while, he kept writing and publishing—essays, short stories, and, of course, fiction—to widespread acclaim.

Starting in the '90s, Salman published a string of novels, each more ambitious than the last. There was *The Moor's Last Sigh*, a time-bending tale framed around the spice trade; *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, which reimaged the Orpheus myth as a 20th-century rock 'n' roll love triangle; *Shalimar the Clown*, a book so epic it was adapted into an opera by the Pulitzer Prize-nominated playwright Rajiv Joseph. By the mid 2000s, Salman was both the most distinguished fiction writer of his era and an international pop culture icon.

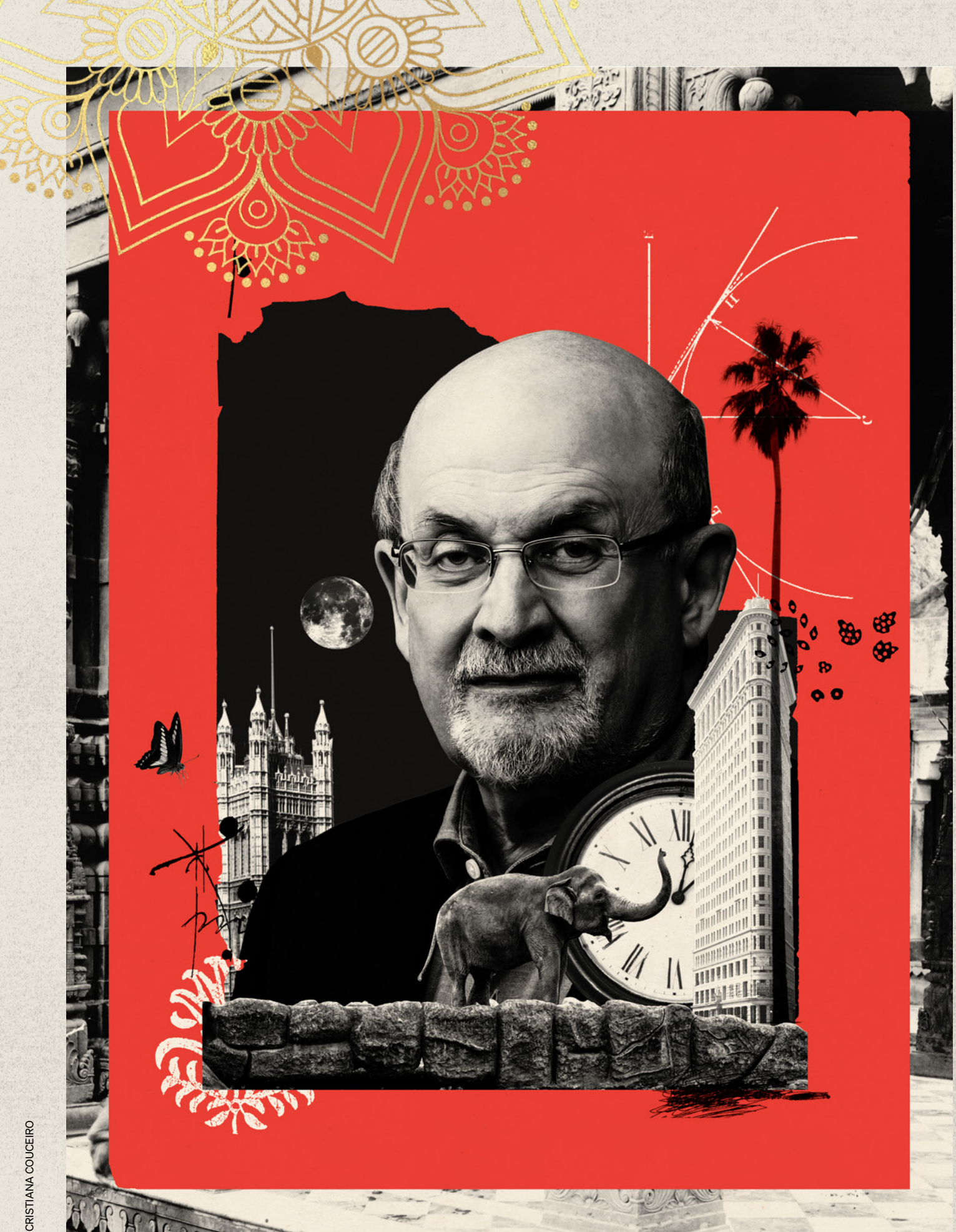
Today, he occupies a rare space in modern society, a legitimate canon author whose expansive social circle includes celebrity friends, from Courtney Love to Diane von Furstenberg. He lives in New York, where he continues to teach and write, and is now Sir Salman Rushdie, knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2007 for his services to literature.

Perhaps above all else, Salman embodies a type of magic all authors hope to possess: the ability to make fiction read as though it is reality. Some stories are not true, “but by being untrue,” he has written, they can make you “feel and know truths that the truth could not.” This is a recurring theme in his work as well as in this class. Salman wants you to answer essential questions, understand the art of research, experiment with language and prose, master realism and surrealism, and critically reflect on the rights of storytellers.

Finally, he wants you to consider the life of the fiction writer and the lives of the characters they create. These are not always the same. But they are not always quite so different, either.

For more on becoming a successful writer, including exercises to improve your writing skills, visit [masterclass.com](https://www.masterclass.com).







# All the World's a Stage

From South Asia to Britain to the U.S., Salman is a man on the move—and he's found success at every turn

1947

Born in Bombay (Mumbai), India

1961

Sent to boarding school in England for private education

1968

Moves to Pakistan after graduating from Cambridge University

1969

Returns to England and begins working as a copywriter

1980

Quits copywriting job at Ogilvy & Mather ad agency

2004

Elected president of PEN American Center

2000

Moves to New York

2007

Knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for services to literature

2005

Wins Hutch Crossword Book Award for *Shalimar the Clown*

1996

Named U.K. Author of the Year at the Galaxy National Book Awards

1988

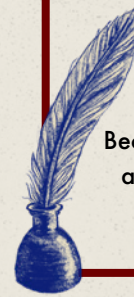
Wins Whitbread Novel Award for *The Satanic Verses*

1983

Appears on *Granta's* "Best of Young British Novelists" list

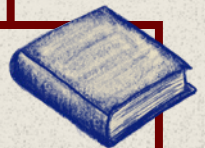
1981

Wins Booker Prize for *Midnight's Children*



2015

Becomes writer in residence at New York University's school of journalism







## CULTURE CONNECTION

Part of what makes Salman so unique as an author is his ability to infuse high literature with pop culture sensibility. He'll take you from Shakespeare to the Kardashians and back without batting an eye. That, and the fact that his life story has played out like a Hollywood thriller, made him an early "influencer." Here's just a sampling of how he's made his way into the zeitgeist.

### STRADDLING TWO WORLDS

Salman's books are full of Hollywood (and Bollywood) characters, along with other pop culture references, making for a modern sort of mythology. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, for instance, retells the history of rock 'n' roll through a parallel universe inspired by the ancient Greek legend of Orpheus and Eurydice. And his children's book *Luka and the Fire of Life* was inspired by his son's video games.

### COMIC RELIEF

Larry David, of *Seinfeld* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm* fame, is a well-known Rushdie-phile. Salman has figured into both of David's shows, especially the latter, in which an entire season revolves around David's hilarious effort to create a musical based on *The Satanic Verses* controversy. Lin-Manuel Miranda plays Salman, while the author makes a cameo appearance—fitting, as he relishes humor to bring levity to the often heavy topics of his writing.

### UNEXPECTED CAMEOS

Salman has a handful of other screen credits. He played himself in *Bridget Jones's Diary* and the gynecologist of Helen Hunt's character in *Then She Found Me*. He wrote the screenplay for the film version of *Midnight's Children*. He also has a big-time music credit: The lyrics of the U2 song "The Ground Beneath Her Feet" were taken word for word from Salman's book of the same name.

### THE BARD OF REALITY TV

Salman now has more than a million Twitter followers. One of his most shared tweets came in the platform's early days. In 2011, he wrote a limerick teasing Kim Kardashian over her extremely short marriage to the basketball player Kris Humphries: "The marriage of poor kim #kardashian was krushed like a kar in a krashian. Her kris kried, not fair! Why kan't I keep my share? But kar-dashian fell kleen outa fashion."



# Odds and Blends

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Salman's influences are eclectic and sometimes entirely unexpected. Drawing inspiration from an array of literary canons and traditions, he's made a legacy all his own



Chances are Salman will always be seen as an intensely political writer, but he is equally vaunted for the quality of his craft. His ability to layer complex narrative structures, allegorical references, and unexpected multidimensional characters places him in a league with some of the authors who have most influenced his work.

He has remarked that the greats of classical Rome are often “present at my shoulder,” particularly the poet Ovid, who was also subject to controversies in his time. Salman has found kindred literary spirits across diverse constellations of genres and eras. “When I first read the novels of Jane Austen,” he said during a lecture in Italy, “the thing that struck me about her heroines was how Indian, how contemporary, they seemed. Those bright, willful, sharp-tongued women, brimming with potential but doomed by the narrow convention to an interminable *huis-clos* of ballroom dancing and husband hunting, were women whose counterparts could be found throughout the Indian bourgeoisie.” He added that, “Charles Dickens, too, struck me from the first as a quintessentially Indian novelist.”

Those may seem like surprising statements. But in many respects the measure of a great artist is their ability to express universal human traits through exquisitely rendered and intensely specific contextual details. Salman took notes from another immortal British literary figure, too: Shakespeare taught him to “just throw it all up in the air...if you do it right, it works,” he said during a lecture at Emory University. “For me, that was really inspirational to think that you could be everything at once...history and fantasy and tragedy, macabre and farce...it seemed to me if you could do that right, it would feel like life.”

Salman's scope of influence isn't limited to those in the classical Anglo tradition. He's certainly following in the footsteps of literary giants like Gabriel García Márquez, the author of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, one of the kings of magical realism—and a fearless political-literary

figure. The influence of writers whose work stems from a mixing of cultures, like the Chicano novelist Rudolfo Anaya, can be plainly seen in Salman's books. But so is that of writers at odds with their culture, living in a state of literal or figurative exile—Salman has cited James Joyce, for instance, as one of his primary inspirations.

This is perhaps the best way of placing his work. Works like *Shame* and *Fury* fit in best alongside these authors whose work emerges from the crucible of trying to find their place in the world, attempting to pull meaning from those inherent conflicts. This is an arena where Salman's influence has been legion. He is well-known as an inspiration and mentor to the next generation of Indian authors who write in English, a diaspora that includes Arundhati Roy (*The God of Small Things*) and Jhumpa Lahiri (*The Namesake*). Literary critics have even coined a name for this cohort of post-Rushdie Indian writers: Midnight's Grandchildren, a reference to his breakout book.

## LET'S MAKE A DEAL

As *Catch-22* author Joseph Heller told Salman: Most books grow from a single sentence. When writing your first line, think: What type of novel is this? A comedy? An epic? A thriller? The opening can be grand, simple, contradictory, assertive. But it should propose a contract to the reader: If you keep going, I'll tell you a certain kind of story.

For more tips on [writing an opening line](https://www.masterclass.com), go to [masterclass.com](https://www.masterclass.com).



# KEEP YOUR INFLUENCES, KILL YOUR DARLINGS

Every author, from Jane Austen to Jhumpa Lahiri, must devise a personal process for self-editing. Below, you'll find one basic method used—in some form or iteration—by many fiction writers like Salman. The finer points aren't so important as the approach: An open mind and honest perspective are key. You may need to eliminate a character, discard a whole subplot, even change the major storyline. Don't feel bad; it's all part of the writer's journey. And, more often than not, it's an indicator of progress.

STAGE  
#1

## STAGE #1: CONCEPTUAL EDIT

This twofold edit begins while you're writing as you continually look back on earlier chapters and make adjustments. The second more substantial part of the edit happens when you've finished. Print out the manuscript and bloody the pages in red pen. Try rearranging chapters, cutting or adding scenes, leaving notes. (As you read the whole story at once, new insights will surface.) Trust yourself, and don't be too precious. Tear your novel apart and see what happens.

STAGE  
#2

## STAGE #2: LINE EDIT

Once the manuscript feels conceptually cohesive, take a closer look at the language on a line-by-line basis. Focus on tightness and economy: Eliminate redundancies, make each word fight for its place on the page. Be ruthless. You can usually cut (at least) 10 percent of your writing simply by trimming your sentences. Pick up a copy of *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers, 2nd Edition* (2004) by professional editors Renni Browne and Dave King. It's a go-to resource for learning how to polish your work.

STAGE  
#3

## STAGE #3: CHAPTER EDIT

Go through your work section by section and ask yourself: What did I accomplish in this chapter? Write a short answer for each one. (Remember, some chapters exist to set up later chapters, which in itself is a valid objective.) The result should be an outline-type overview of your novel. You'll notice if a chapter is too busy (and needs to be broken up) or too dull (and should be consolidated into another chapter or eliminated altogether). This will help you control the pacing of your story.

STAGE  
#4

## STAGE #4: GESTATION

Once you've finished your edit, put the manuscript on a shelf for a few weeks—or months. When you return to it, you'll bring a fresh perspective to it that will help you enormously in any future editing. Don't try to make everything perfect. Over-editing your novel can crush your original inspiration and damage the good work you've done.



# The (Mostly) Complete Annotated Salman Rushdie Reader

Salman is best known for his novels, but he's also an accomplished essayist and memoirist who has dabbled in several genres—including children's books

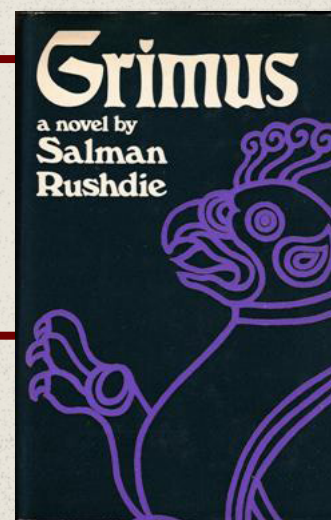
## LEGEND

- Novels
- Children's Books
- Short Stories
- Nonfiction

1975

### *Grimus*

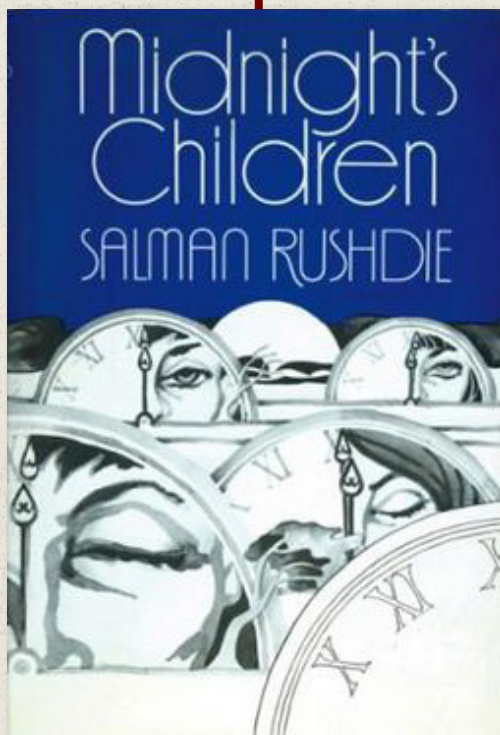
A work of science fiction in which an immortal man makes a mythological journey to regain the gift of mortality



1981

### *Midnight's Children*

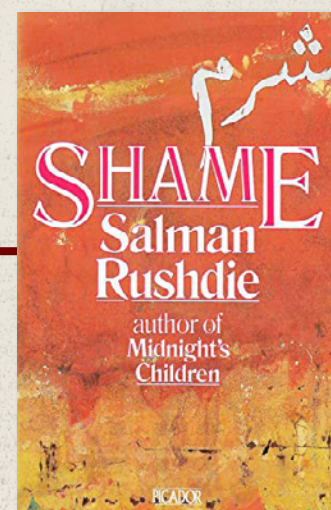
A modern masterpiece that charts the trials, tribulations, and magical powers of a group of children born in 1947, at the precise moment India became independent from Britain



1983

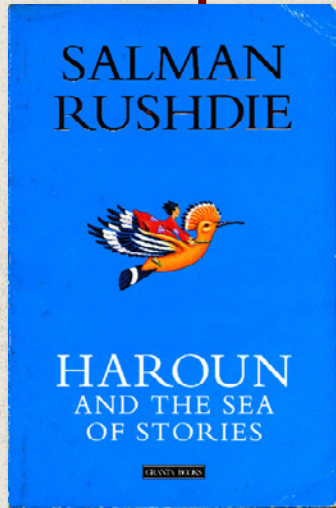
### *Shame*

An allegorical commentary on Pakistani society that chronicles two families and their patriarchs—one infatuated with war, the other obsessed with pleasure





1990



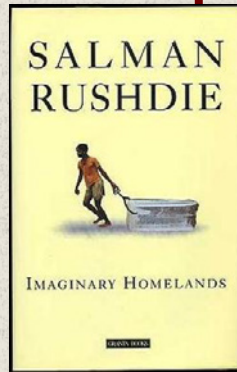
## Haroun and the Sea of Stories

Dedicated to Salman's son, this is in many ways a children's version of his fictionalized critiques of religious intolerance

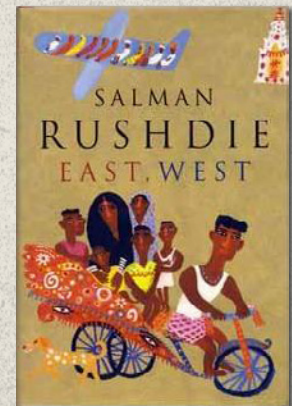
1991

## Imaginary Homelands

A collection of essays written between 1981 and 1991 that explores the manufacturing of identity in the globalized age



1994



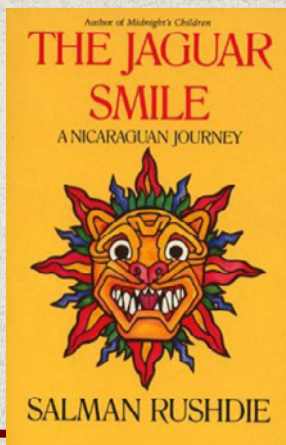
## East, West

A collection of stories that explores many of the East-meets-West culture clashes the author has navigated in real life

1988

## The Satanic Verses

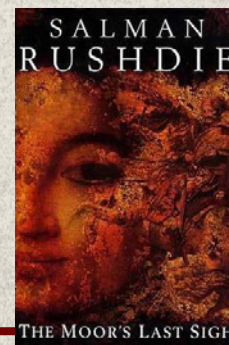
An epic tale of two men whose lives take on mythological qualities after enduring a surreal terrorist attack aboard a jet from India to Britain



## The Jaguar Smile

A novelistic account of Salman's trip to Nicaragua following the international controversy between the Sandinistas and various world powers

1987



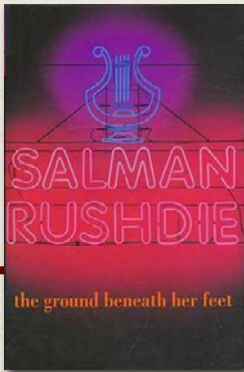
1995

## The Moor's Last Sigh

The story of a spice trader, who ages twice as fast as normal humans, and his relationships with the women in his life



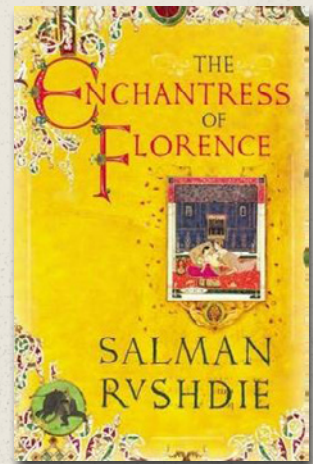
1999



## *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

A retelling of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice that simultaneously examines the history of rock music

2008



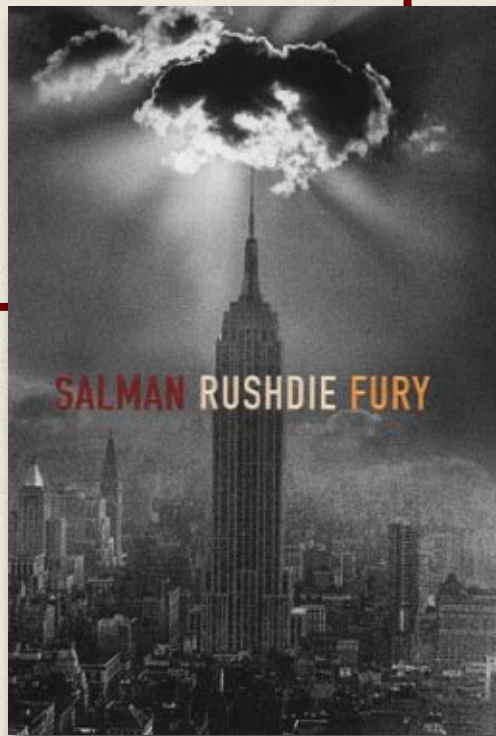
## *The Enchantress of Florence*

Machiavelli is among the characters in a work of historical fiction that constantly ebbs in and out of fantasy as it moves back and forth from Italy to India

2001

## *Fury*

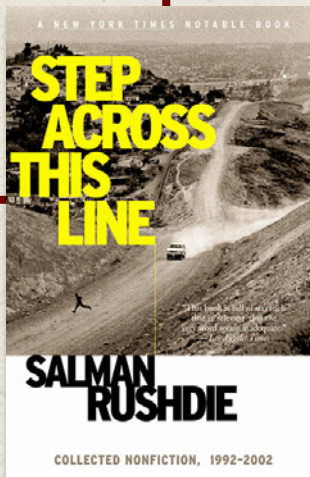
A Brit of Indian descent abandons his family and flees to New York in a darkly comedic plot that probes the corrupting effects of anger, wealth, and globalization



2005

## *Shalimar the Clown*

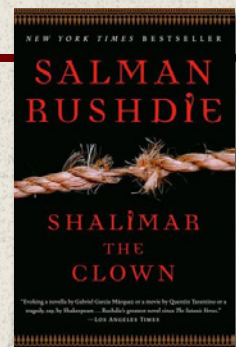
A prominent American counterterrorism official and his Muslim killer lurk at the center of this twisted tale of love and geopolitics



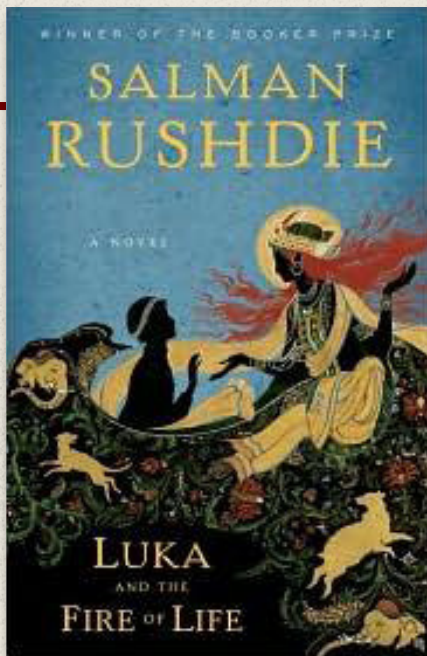
2002

## *Step Across This Line*

This collection of essays, speeches, and opinion pieces, written between 1992 and 2002, focuses on Salman's period of hiding in the wake of *The Satanic Verses* and the world events that transpired around it







2010

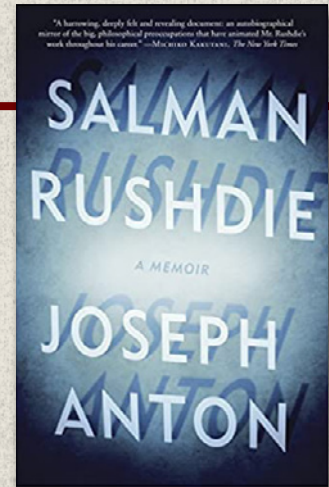
## Luka and the Fire of Life

A sequel to his first children's book that inhabits a similarly fantastical world (this time inspired by video games) as the main character seeks a sort of Holy Grail that he hopes will revive his ailing father

2012

## Joseph Anton

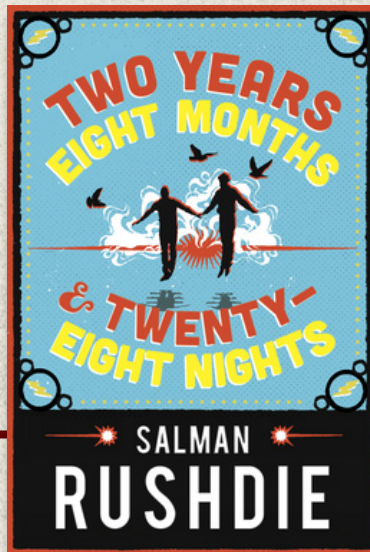
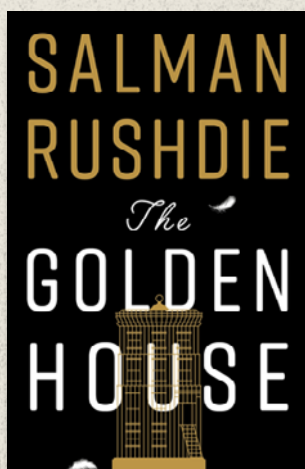
The full story of the fallout from *The Satanic Verses* controversy, this memoir chronicles Salman's time spent writing and navigating romance and fatherhood while under police protection



2017

## The Golden House

This contemporary realist parable chronicles a wealthy and exceedingly strange Manhattan family, and nods at the real-life drama unfolding in America as Donald Trump rises to power



2015

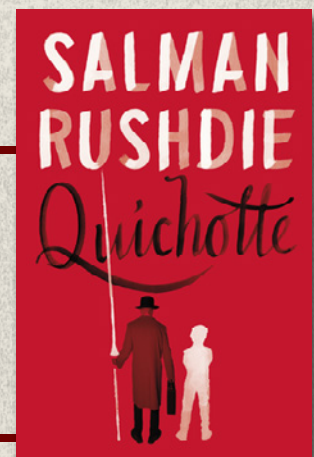
## Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights

Centered on a family of jinns (genies), this phantasmagoric tale features Ibn Rushd, a famous Islamic philosopher and Salman's family's namesake

2019

## Quichotte

Inspired by *Don Quixote*, the metafictional plot of Salman's most recent book involves an Indian American man and a celebrity television host



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Already finished and need a literary agent? It's all at [masterclass.com](https://www.masterclass.com).



# Surreal Life

## What is magical realism?



Consider four of the most influential novels of the past century: *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende, and *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel. The common thread? Magical realism, a literary genre in which fantastical characters and events are set against a realistic backdrop. This contrast can supply potent narrative tension or, when used expertly, point at larger ideas: escapism and survival, humor and horror, isolation and connection, the relative nature of absurdity, and the multiplicity of contradictions therein.

In the magical realist novel, inanimate objects speak, people fly, ghosts consort with the living. But this isn't fantasy or science fiction. Elements of magic are situated in a setting that feels familiar and natural to the reader—within a place, culture, or historical moment that actually existed—so the fantastical feels almost plausible.

Magical realism is most widely associated with mid-20th-century Latin American literature, borrowing from indigenous narratives and myths, with traces of French surrealism. But authors from all over the world have employed the technique for decades. Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, in which a man wakes up one morning as an insect, is now considered a North Star of the genre. In the 1980s, Salman took the form to new heights—and did so in a very different cultural and political context. He is known for imbuing stories with a particularly taut dance between the real and the magical: The real parts are as precise and detailed as a work of historical fiction, while the magical components are cosmically imaginative.

Salman is also following the likes of Márquez and Kafka, who used the technique for social and political commentary: The realist elements hint at the situation being critiqued, while the magical parts act as the critique. The former enables the latter, according to Salman. In his non-fiction collection *Step Across This Line*, the author writes that the aim of *Midnight's Children* was to “set against a scrupulously observed social and historical background—against, that is, the canvas of a ‘real’ India—my ‘unrealist’



notion of children born at the midnight moment of India's independence, and endowed with magical powers by the coincidence, children who were in some way the embodiment of both the hopes and the flaws of that revolution.” Because the realist aspects of the novel are so convincingly written, we don't blink when the protagonist, Saleem Sinai, communicates telepathically and has a supernatural sense of smell.

The masters of magical realism are careful not to lean on the magic—it's a seasoning best used in moderation. In fact, many great writers outside of the tradition could be said to employ the technique in a subtle way. In his lectures, Salman has spoken about this in the context of Charles Dickens, whom he cites as a primary influence: “I was particularly taken with what struck me as his real innovation: namely, his unique combination of naturalistic backgrounds and surreal foregrounds. In Dickens, the details of place and social mores are skewered by a pitiless realism, a naturalistic exactitude that has never been bettered. Upon this realistic canvas he places his outsize characters, in whom we have no choice but to believe because we cannot fail to believe in the world they live in.”

Dickens's characters did not have magical powers, but he rendered them in a light that emphasized the surrealness of their situation—the absurd contrasts between the poor and the wealthy in Victorian England. Likewise, Salman's recent novel *The Golden House* veered heavily toward realism, albeit of the satirical brand. In poking at the absurdities of modern life, the book maintains the aura of surrealness in his earlier, more fantastical work. Reality, as they say, can be stranger than fiction.



# SALMAN'S SURREALIST READING LIST

Fourteen picks (and a few notes) from the man himself

## *The Handmaid's Tale*

by Margaret Atwood

Famous "speculative fiction" novel set in a prophetic dystopia

## *The Master and Margarita*

by Mikhail Bulgakov  
The Devil comes to Moscow and creates mayhem while a writer, the Master, retells the story of Jesus Christ from the point of view of Pontius Pilate

## *Kindred*

by Octavia Butler  
Time-traveling saga mingling time travel with slave narratives-

## *The Cloven Viscount*

by Italo Calvino  
In battle, the viscount is sliced vertically in half. Both halves live—one impossibly saintly, the other amor, and both do equal amounts of harm, until...

## *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

by Gabriel García Márquez  
The great classic of multiple generations of life in the fabulous town of Macondo

## *The Tin Drum*

by Günter Grass  
Oskar, the tin drummer, chooses not to

grow up, and so, as a child, is able to watch the rise and fall of Nazism

## *The Metamorphosis*

by Franz Kafka  
Gregor Samsa wakes up to find he's been turned into a giant bug

## *The Left Hand of Darkness*

by Ursula K. Le Guin  
One of the early masterworks of feminist science fiction

## *Beloved*

by Toni Morrison  
The ghost of a Black girl murdered by her mother to save her

from slavery may have been reborn in this great novel

## *Kafka on the Shore*

by Haruki Murakami  
A runaway boy talks to a crow and a mentally damaged man talks to cats, among much else

## *Pedro Páramo*

by Juan Rulfo  
A son searching for his father travels to the town of Comala and discovers it's a town of ghosts

## *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*

## by Mary Shelley

A young scientist creates humanoid life, but his creation is a monster

## *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

by Robert Louis Stevenson  
The celebrated story of good metamorphosing into evil, told by multiple narrators

## *Slaughterhouse-Five, or The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance With Death*

by Kurt Vonnegut  
The firebombing of Dresden, the faraway planet of Tralfamadore, and a soldier in World War II who keeps jumping through time and space

## 3 WRITING ASSIGNMENTS FROM SALMAN

● "Imagine a character who is happily married, in love, and contented. Then, out of the blue, an old flame reappears, and your character is drawn back toward that old passion as well. But is the old flame even real, or just an apparition? What might the story be about (a) if it's a real person, and what might it mean if (b) it's a ghost or a vision?" —S.R.

● "Suppose that in a quiet suburban neighborhood, one day, a flying saucer lands on somebody's lawn. Nobody comes out of it. Nothing happens. One day later it vanishes, equally inexplicably. Imagine what strange effects it might leave behind. Maybe the local children suddenly start speaking in an unknown language? Maybe all the women discover they are pregnant? What happens next?" —S.R.

● "Think of the family story that means most to you, and imagine your character telling a version of that story, which is precious to them, to a lover who is convinced that your character is lying. How does their relationship work out?" —S.R.

For more on magical realism (and how to approach writing this unique genre), head over to [masterclass.com](https://www.masterclass.com).



# Grand Tour

Over the course of three celebrated novels, Salman demonstrates how a strong central idea—in his case, personal identity—can become a fount of creative material



Salman is seen as a writer who probes his own mixed identity—Kashmiri, Indian, Muslim, secularist, British, American, immigrant, elite—for insight on the human condition. These various and contradictory selves spill into his fictional characters, whose lives are fraught with the struggle to answer the question *Who am I?*

Numerous theses, dissertations, and scholarly papers have dissected Salman's work in this context. One of them, "Identity Crisis" by the Indian scholar P.R.V.N. Kesava Kumar, notes that most of the author's novels center on "the violent struggles between different religions, classes, languages, and geographical regions." Chhote Lal Khatri, another Indian scholar, refers to Salman as a "migratory bird" wounded by "rootlessness, alienation and the failure to reconcile to the newfound situations." Salman's 1991 collection of essays, *Imaginary Homelands*, expounds on this theme of migration. He refers to the migrant as "perhaps, the central or defining figure of the twentieth century."

Both in fiction and real life, people are often reduced to the sum of their socially prescribed identities. Salman grapples with those external definitions and notions, ultimately revealing the humanity of his characters—and himself. This was especially evident between 1981 and 1988, when the author published three acclaimed novels, each of which explored aspects of his own identity in the hope of reconciling its many facets and complexities.

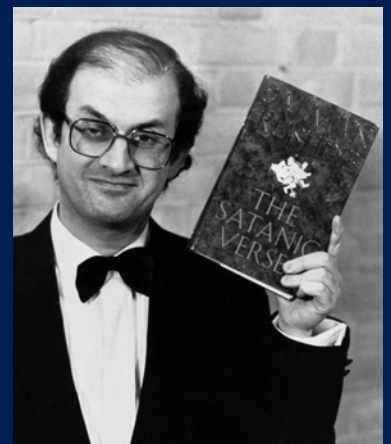
## MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN

The narrator and protagonist, Saleem Sinai, was born at the stroke of midnight on the day of India's independence from Britain in August 1947. (Salman himself was born a few months before.) The plot unfolds against the backdrop of actual events—the tumultuous reign of Indira Gandhi, violence and strife among religious groups—that plagued the subcontinent during this period. Salman,

## A PARTICULAR COLLISION WITH HISTORY

In 1989, when Iran's leader deemed the religious commentary in *The Satanic Verses* blasphemous, Salman went into hiding and remained underground for much of the next decade. "The saddest irony of all," Salman wrote in a 1989 essay for *The New York Review of Books*, was that he wrote *The Satanic Verses* "to give voice and fictional flesh to the immigrant culture of which I am myself a member." Instead, the book was burned, largely unread, by the people it was written about—the very people, Salman believed, who could have found "pleasure and much recognition in its pages."

The so-called Rushdie Affair was resolved by the British and Iranian governments through diplomatic channels in 1998. Salman now moves about freely and has used the experience to build his reputation as a political activist and champion for human rights and free speech. To him, an author's right to satirize is essential: "What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist."





who as a teenager left for boarding school in England, did not experience firsthand many of the historical horrors recounted in his book. But he had a direct connection to them through the family he left behind. In his 1991 essay collection, *Imaginary Homelands*, Salman says that writing *Midnight's Children* was a process of reclaiming his Indian roots: "I wanted to restore the past to myself, not in the faded greys of old family-album snapshots, but whole, in CinemaScope and glorious Technicolor."

### SHAME

Though he grew up in Bombay, Salman's ancestors are from Kashmir, a Himalayan region controlled partly by India and partly by Pakistan. His family eventually moved from the former to the latter, where Salman spent several lengthy sabbaticals. He observed the chaos of a young country—a country, according to the book's narrator, that is "not quite." The book, in many ways, is a parable about the shame of a postcolonial people, especially its women, and the shamelessness of autocratic leaders in exploiting that wrecked emotional state. Like Salman, the narrator lives in England and tells the tale from afar, yet with an intimate connection to the characters and their plight. This feeling of dislocation is embodied by one of the main characters, a man "plagued by that improbable vertigo, by the sense of being a creature of the edge: a peripheral man."

### THE SATANIC VERSES

The personal allegory in Salman's best-known work is hard to miss: In the opening scene, a flight from Bombay to London is hijacked. The two main characters, both on board, embark on a fantastical quest for selfhood as they fall toward the English Channel. Both are Muslim Indians—one a Bollywood actor who plays Hindu gods (a clever critique of religion), the other a voice-over actor living in England (an equally clever device to probe the postcolonial immigrant experience). Critics have described the book in the contexts of alienation, brutality, and conformity—concepts, according to the theologian Muhammad Mashuq ibn Ally, that "confront all migrants, disillusioned with both cultures: the one they are in and the one they join." With *The Satanic Verses*, Salman told *The New York Times Magazine*, he felt as though he was "writing for the first time from the whole of myself."

## 5 TIPS FOR OUTLINING YOUR NOVEL

Salman says some writers like to map out a story before they start writing it. If that sounds like you, here's a quick guide to help you put pencil to paper

### Step 1: Craft the premise.

This is the underlying idea of your story. Expand on it by thinking about a main protagonist, their objectives and opposing forces, the central conflict and theme. Write a one-paragraph summary.

### Step 2: Determine the setting.

Establish where (and when) things are happening. Get to know your setting intimately. Picture it in your mind. Write down as much detail as you can: the look, sound, smell, and the overall feel.

### Step 3: Know the characters.

Visualize these people and develop their backstories; determine which are central to the plot and which are not. Write character profiles.

### Step 4: Construct the plot.

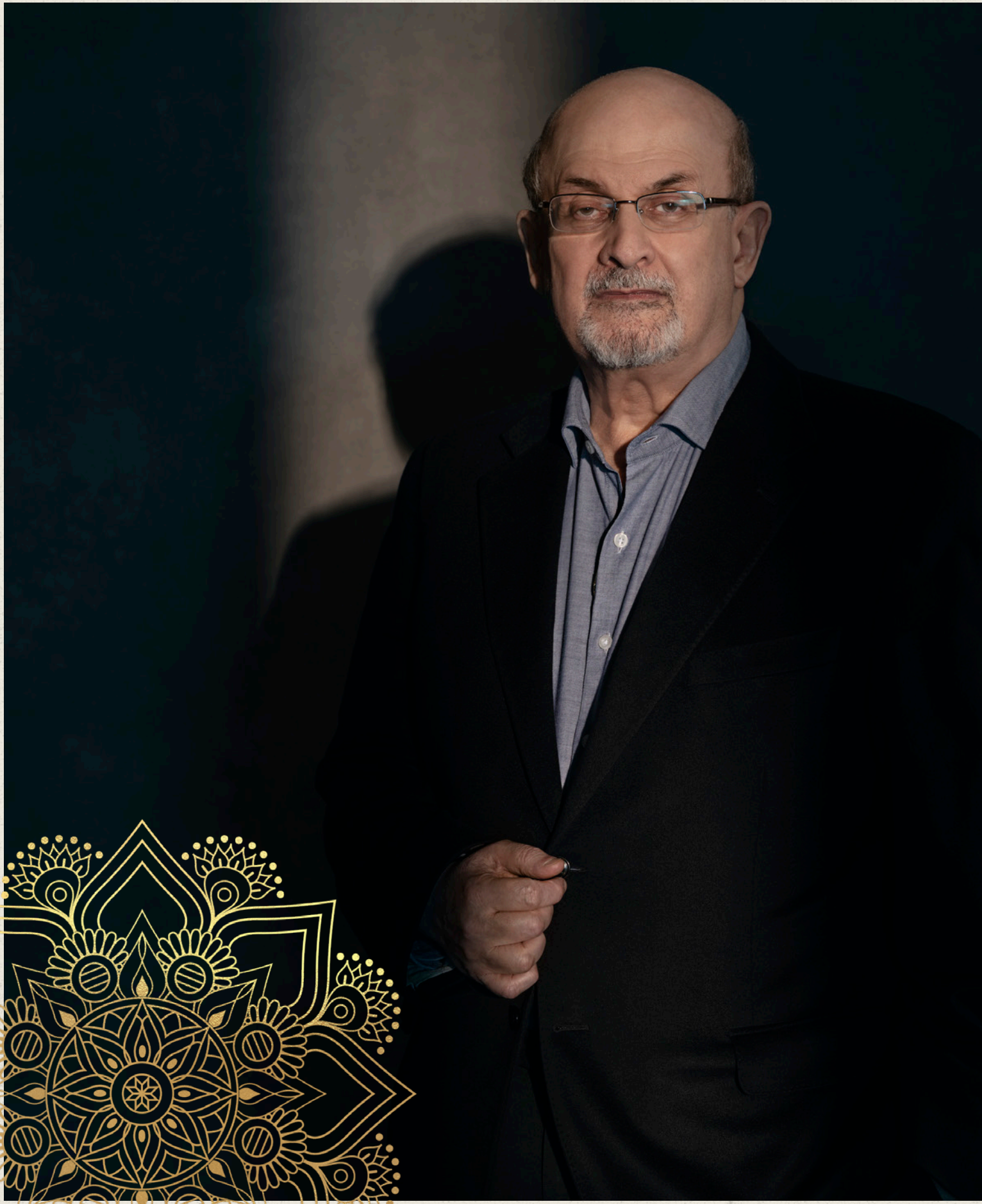
Focus on the story's sole dramatic question. Create a timeline of events, noting how they impact the plot and offer opportunities for subplots.

### Step 5: Write the scenes.

Add scenes to the plot outline and flesh them out (where the action takes place, who is involved, snippets of dialogue). Now you can start writing your first draft, knowing you can always return to the outline to see the big picture.

For more pointers on [outlining your novel](https://www.masterclass.com), head to [masterclass.com](https://www.masterclass.com).







**“The  
purpose  
of all good  
literature  
is to tell  
the truth.”**

**—Salman**





## CLASS CREDITS

**SALMAN RUSHDIE AND SON**

Photograph by Judith Aronson / National Portrait Gallery, London

